DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 044 749 CG 006 056

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TITLE Counselor Bias and the Female Occupational Role.
INSTITUTION Wayne State Univ., Detroit, Mich. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE 70
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.75
DESCRIPTORS *Bias, *Career Choice, *Counselor Attitudes, Counselor Characteristics, Counselor Evaluation, Counselors, Counselor Training, *Discriminatory Attitudes (Social), *Females, Social Attitudes, Social Discrimination, Vocational Development

ABSTRACT

The inferior position of women in the world of work is discussed as a backdrop for this study which sought to test the hypothesis that counselors are biased against women entering a "masculine" occupation. A coached female counselee, portraying a college junior who is having difficulty deciding between teaching and engineering, was privately interviewed by 16 male and 13 female counselor trainees at Wayne State University. All interviews were taped and then rated for their apparent bias by: (1) a male graduate student in counseling and guidance; (2) a male counselor educator; and (3) a female college professor. Results indicated that counselor bias exists against women entering a "masculine" occupation. Female counselors displayed as much bias as males. Implications are discussed. (TI)

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ABSTRACT

Counselors in training generally verbalize the notion that they should not impose their own biases regarding age, sex, color, class on counselees. The counselor's behavior in actual counseling sessions should reflect this oft-stated opinion. The current study then looked at counselor bias in the process of role stereotyping of women. Twenty-nine counselors in practicum were confronted by a young lady choosing between a so-called "feminine" or "masculine" occupational field. Content analysis of each taped interview was performed to note bias statements. It appears that counselors, both male and female, reflect during counseling their bias against women entering a "masculine" occupation. The implications of this finding are discussed.

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CG 006 056

COUNSELOR BIAS AND THE FEMALE OCCUPATIONAL ROLE

by
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INTRODUCTION

Even though a large percentage of women work, and a large percentage of workers are women, the startling fact is the decline in their position in recent years. For example:

> There are nearly twenty-eight million female workers in 1966 representing over one-third of the country's work force, and yet "women are concentrated to a considerable extent in low-skilled, low-paid jobs" and "their representation among professional workers has actually declined from 40 per cent in 1950 to 37 per cent in 1966 (Manpower Report of the President, 1967, p. 133).

Furthermore, women receive proportionately fewer Master's degrees and Doctorates today than in the 1920's, and women hold proportionately fewer technical and professional positions today than in 1940 (Millett, 1968, p.8; Manpower Report of the President, 1967, p. 133). Complicating the picture is the fact that the sexes are unevenly distributed as to field of endeavor within broad occupational groups. It has been substantiated that:

> American education is blighted by a sex-split in its curriculum. At present the whole field of knowledge is divided along tacit but well understood sex lines. Those subjects given the highest status in American life are 'masculine;' those given the lowest are 'feminine'...thus math, the sciences...business administration... are men's subjects...and the humanities are relegated...'suitable to women' (Millett, p. 14).

> Furthermore, women receive lower salaries than their male counterparts. In 1965 women employed full-time had a median wage of $3800 in contrast to nearly $6400 for men (Manpower Report of the President, 1967, p. 133).

> Discrimination in the world of work can be easily seen when one examines the number of women in certain high-status fields. For example, only 208 are women listed among the 6,597 members of the

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> American Institute of Physics. One-half of the women are employed as physics teachers. Of the 600,000 people classified as in engineering and related technical fields only 6,000 are women. About 7 percent of chemists, 3 percent of all dentists, and 4 percent of the doctors are women (Cassara, 1963, p. 77).

Unbalanced occupational distribution of the sexes is easier to understand when considering legislation like the Vocational Education Act which reflects and reinforces larger cultural biases against women, by providing training for girls, but in the traditional areas of dental assistant, licensed practical nurse, or hairdresser.

As counselor educators, our concern deals with the degree to which counselors aid and abet this situation.

PROBLEM

Since many high school and college women discuss their choice of major and occupation with counselors, the question arises--what do counselors feel the role of women should be? In discussing this question with counselors-in-training, they voice a partial egalitarian view - women should do whatever they want to do. Since actions speak louder than words, it was decided to study actual interviews of counselors-in-training with a female client who was deciding between a "feminine" and "masculine" occupational role. The assumption was that through careful analysis of verbatim interviews, the degree of counselor bias would be revealed. Thus, this study was conceived as an investigation of the counselor's bias in the total process of role stereotyping of women. If counselors do display bias, the ramifications of such a fact would have to be taken into account in counselor education programs.

METHOD

Introduction. In order to test the hypothesis that counselors are biased against women entering a "masculine" occupation, the investigators arranged interviews between counselor trainees in the counseling practicum at Wayne

State University and a coached female counselee. During the counseling session the counselee informed the counselor that she was a transfer student to Wayne State University, that she was entering her junior year of college and could not decide whether to enter the field of engineering, a "masculine" occupation, or enter the field of education, a "feminine" occupation.

Each interview was tape recorded. At the end of the interview the counselor was informed that the counselee had been coached and that the sessions and tapes were to be used for a research study. Counselors were informed not to mention their interviews to other counselors. After all counselors had conducted interviews, a brief discussion was held among the counselor group concerning their feelings about the counseling sessions. No other information was given to the counselors.

The Subjects. The subjects (counselors) in the study were students in the Practicum Fall and Winter quarters 1968-1969. The counselor group, then, consisted of twenty-nine people, i.e., sixteen males and thirteen females.

The Procedure. The tapes were reviewed and tabulated as to their bias by a male graduate student in guidance and counseling, a male counselor educator with a solid background in counseling practicum, and a female college professor, former school psychologist with a research specialty. Frequencies and percentages were calculated and chi square was then used in a variety of configurations. The final stage of the project involved a content analysis of all biased statements.

The raters designated a counselor's statement as biased or prejudicial against the female counselee when she expressed interest in the "masculine" field and the counselor rejected this interest in favor of the "feminine" vocation. Statements of rejection then included disapproval of the female counselee's desire to enter the "masculine" field - comments that implied disadvantages in entering that field, etc. A counselor's statement was considered biased for the female counselee when she expressed interest in

the masculine occupation and the counselor supported or reinforced this expressed interest. Statement of positive bias toward females included direct approval to statements that subtlely implied advantages in entering the masculine field.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicated that counselor bias exists against women entering a masculine occupation. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

The data suggest that counselors do hold bias against women entering a so-called "masculine" occupation. Female counselors, interestingly enough, displayed as much bias as did their male counterparts. The results tend to suggest that male and female counselors both display more statements "biased against females" than "biased for females". The three ratings combined showed a significant difference at the .01 level of confidence. Percentage results strongly reinforce the conclusion that counselors are biased against women entering masculine fields. Of the total bias statements, 81.3 per cent are against women, whereas only 18.7 per cent are biased for women. The tables, containing percentages, further demonstrate quite vividly the disparity between bias for and bias against females.

A content analysis of the 79 biased statements made by the counselors in this study reveals that most negatively biased statements emphasized the masculinity of the field. (See Table 3), Working conditions and promotional opportunity were a far second and third.

Out of a total of 79 items classified by content analysis as biased statements, only 5 were positive and most of those were made by women. Thus, the pressures against women working in a field stereotyped as masculine were prevalent among this group.

In order to tabulate the statements 10 categories were devised so that negative bias (NB) and positive bias (PB) statements could be classified as to content. The following examples of bias statements will give the flavor

of the kinds of pressures counselors imposed.

Salary - Amount of monetary return

(NB) "Money isn't everything."
(PB) "You could make much more money as an engineer."

Status - Perception of self in vocation

(NB) "The status of a woman is higher in the field of teaching."
(PB) "There is more prestige in becoming an engineer."

Marriage and Family - Family Attachment

(NB) "Would your husband resent you being an engineer?"
(NB) "You would only be gone from home during school hours if you taught school."
(PB) "Being an engineer would not interfere with you becoming married."

Parents - Parental Support

(NB) "How do your parents feel about you entering engineering instead of education?"
(PB) "I am glad your parents want you to become an engineer."

Educational Time - Amount of time necessary for preparation to enter the vocational field.

(NB) "Engineering would take five years and elementary education would be four years...These are things you might want to consider."
(PB) "It may take longer to become an engineer but it is well worth it."

Educational Preparation - Classes one must take to enter the field and the kinds of classes already taken.

(NB) "The course work in engineering would be very difficult."
(PB) "Your classwork up to now shows that you would do well as an engineer."

Promotional Opportunities - Advancement in position

(NB) "There might be a holding of you back because you are a woman."
(PB) "Your chances of promotion would be good in engineering."

Hiring - Opportunity to enter field.

(NB) "They are not supposed to discriminate against women, but they still get around it."
(PB) "The opportunities for a woman in engineering are good."

Working Conditions - Where, with whom, what kind of work, and/or under what conditions work is done.

(NB) "Engineering...it is very, you know, technical, and very, I could use the term 'unpeopled'."
(PB) "You could work at a relaxed pace as an engineer."

Masculine Occupation - Identification of occupation as masculine

(NB) "You normally think of this as a man's field."
(PB) "There is no such thing as a man's world anymore."

IMPLICATIONS

Hopefully, counselors would not reflect in their interaction with their female counselees the prejudices and biases of the larger society. Counselors should be made aware of sex biases entering into the process. Westervelt (1963, pp. 21-22) wrote

> Male counselors and student counselors who express the conviction that women's primary and socially essential roles are domestic and maternal and take place in the home may be reflecting a covert need to keep them there. Girls and women in the lower socio-economic brackets who particularly need counseling help to recognize and plan for paid employment - will get little assistance from such counselors. Nor, of course, will these counselors help intellectually and educationally privileged girls to use their gifts and training to best advantage.
>
> ...No formal, university sponsored, graduate level, degree-awarding program in counselor education requires even a one-semester course in social and psychological sex differences which affect development or provides any focus on sex differences in a practicum or internship in counseling...
>
> The trends toward the integration into counselor education, at basic levels, of more subject matter from social psychology, anthropology, sociology, and economics would also provide more exposure to materials on psycho-social sex differences and changing sex roles. Again, however, the effect of such exposure will depend on the student's initial sympathetic interest, since the material will be only a small part of a much larger whole.

Westervelt (1963, pp. 26-28) makes reference to the role, and moreso, the importance of the practicum in the training of counselors:

> Counselors, guidance workers and student personnel workers who are planning to work chiefly with girls and women should have as many opportunities as possible to counsel with females--and, ideally, with females of all ages, in order that, no matter what the age level with which they eventually work, they get an opportunity to observe at first hand the patterns of continuity and discontinuity

> in feminine development. Counseling experience should not, however, be limited to working with females; opportunity to counsel with boys and men is most important, both because it will provide insights into psycho-social sex differences and because it will provide a chance to explore useful variations in approaches to counseling the two sexes. All counselors-in-training should be helped to identify, understand and work with sex differences in their counseling practicum or internship...There is a need for practice or field work programs in educational/vocational counseling which will focus on this kind of counseling with adults (men as well as women, of course).

The implications of the study are quite clear - counselors, both male and female hold biases against female counselees entering an occupation characteristically associated with males. Counselor education programs must take this into account in their programs and attempt to bring into the open such biased feelings, so that counselors are able to control them, or better yet, remove them from their counseling and human encounters.

SUMMARY

This study attempted to determine if counselors, both male and female, are biased against women entering what is considered a "masculine" occupation. Counseling sessions were arranged between counselor trainees and a coached female counselee. Counseling tapes were analyzed by a (1) graduate student in counselor education, (2) male counselor educator with extensive supervisory background in the practicum and (3) female professor with a research background.

The following conclusions may be drawn:

1. Counselors display less bias against female counselees entering a female occupation than toward females entering a so-called "masculine" occupation.
2. Female counselors display as much bias against females as their male counselor counterparts.
3. Content analysis of bias statements indicate that major stress is placed upon the "masculinity" of the occupation.

Women should have an equal opportunity to compete in the world of work with their male counterparts. Yet, discriminatory practices still exist. Further, subtle pressures and influences against entering so-called "masculine" occupations

by parents, as well as teachers and counselors, may do more harm than discriminatory practices by employers.

TABLE 1

Classification of Biased Comments For and Against Women Entering the "Masculine" Occupation of Engineering[a]

(All Raters Combined)

Group	Bias For Women	Bias Against Women	Total Bias Statements
Males	6	62	68
Females	22	60	82
	28	122	150

$X^2 = 7.94^{**}$

[a]In this table the following symbols are used:

** Significant at the .01 level of confidence
* Significant at the .05 level of confidence
X^2 Chi Square

TABLE 2

Percentage of Total Biased Statements For and Against Women Entering the Occupation of Engineering

(All Raters Combined)

Percentages

Group	Bias For Women	Bias Against Women
Males	4.0	41.3
Females	14.7	40.0
	18.7	81.3

TABLE 3

Content Analysis of Negative and Positive Bias Statements*

	Female Negative	Male Negative	Female Positive	Male Positive	Total
Salary	1	0	1	0	2
Status	1	0	0	0	1
Marriage and Family	1	2	0	0	3
Parents	0	2	0	0	2
Educational Time	2	2	0	0	4
Educational Preparation	0	2	0	0	2
Promotional Opportunity	1	4	0	0	5
Hiring	0	3	0	0	3
Working Conditions	6	3	0	0	9
Masculine Occupation	16	28	3	1	48
Total	28	46	4	1	79

*Not all statements were classifiable and several were appropriate to more than one division.

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